

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

AMEMBASSY LIMA

AMEMBASSY PANAMA

AMEMBASSY QUITO

AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

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EO 11652 NA

TAGS: MILI PFOR VE

SUBJ: MEETING OF LATIN AMERICAN ARMY CHIEFS

REF: CARACAS 2241

SUMMARY: THE ARMY CHIEFS OF EIGHT LATIN AMERICAN NATIONS MET IN CARACAS APR 2-4. THE ORGANIZERS REPEATEDLY EMPHASIZED THE INFORMAL AND SOCIAL CHARACTER OF THIS MEETING, AND THE GROUP ISSUED A BRIEF COMMUNIQUE WHICH NOTED ONLY THAT THESE TALKS REPRESENTED A CONTINUATION OF THE "MILITARY DIALOGUE." THE MEETING DID SERVE, HOWEVER, AS A FURTHER RECOGNITION OF VENEZUELA'S INCREASING INFLUENCE IN LATIN AMERICA. END SUMMARY

1. AS REPORTED REF, VENEZUELAN ARMY COMMANDER, MAJOR GENERAL MANUEL BERECIARTU PARTIDAS, INVITED HIS COLLEAGUES WHO ATTENDED THE AYACUCHO CEREMONIES IN PERU LAST SEP TO VISIT CARACAS.

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IN RESPONSE TO THIS INVITATION THE FOLLOWING OFFICERS VISITED

CARACAS ON APR 2-4, MOST ACCOMPANIED BY THEIR SPOUSES:
BRIG GEN CARLOS A ALCORZA MARGAREJO, COMMANDER OF THE BOLIVIAN
ARMY; BRIG GEN ALVARO VALENCIA TOVAR, COMMANDER OF THE COLOMBIAN
ARMY; BRIG GEN MARIA LOPEZ SERRANO, COMMANDER OF THE ECUADOREAN
ARMY; MAJ GEN ANIBAL CUADRA CARDENAS, CHIEF OF STAFF OF THE
PERUVIAN ARMY; BRIG GEN CARLOS G SUAREZ MASSON, REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE ARGENTINE ARMY; BRIG GEN GUSTAVO ALVAREZ AGUILA,
REPRESENTATIVE OF THE CHILEAN ARMY; AND LT COL FLORENCIO FLORES,
REPRESENTATIVE OF THE NATIONAL GUARD OF THE REPUBLIC OF PANAMA.

2. FOLLOWING THEIR MEETING, THESE ARMY CHIEFS CONFIRMED THEIR
DESIRE TO STRENGTHEN THEIR TIES AND UNITY " IN ORDER TO FOSTER
THE WELL-BEING OF THE PEOPLE OF THEIR COUNTRIES." IN A BRIEF
DECLARATION GIVEN TO THE PRESS, THE ARMY CHIEFS NOTED THEY HAD
"COME TO EXCHANGE IMPRESSIONS CONCERNING THE BEST SYSTEMS OF
COLLABORATION BETWEEN ALL OUR ARMIES, ESPECIALLY
IN VIEW OF THE GLOBAL IMPORTANCE OF LATIN AMERICA. CONCERNING
OUR DISCUSSIONS IN VENEZUELA, ONE CAN SAY THAT WE ARE ALWAYS
WILLING TO HAVE A MILITARY DIALOGUE WHICH SERVES THE BEST INTERESTS
OF OUR PEOPLES. WHAT WE HAVE CONTINUED IN THE AREA OF MILITARY
CONVERSATIONS RELATES TO INTERNAL QUESTIONS AND TO THE PROVISIONING
OF OUR RESPECTIVE ARMIES IN ORDER TO DEFEND EACH ONE OF OUR
COUNTRIES IN LATIN AMERICA."

3. THE SCHEDULE FOR THE ARMY CHIEFS AND THEIR WIVES INCLUDED
CEREMONIAL OCCASIONS, VISITS TO NEARBY TOURIST ATTRACTIONS, AND
A RECEPTION OFFERED BY ARMY CHIEF BERECIARTU. THE GROUP ALSO
HAD A SPECIAL AUDIENCE WITH PRESIDENT PEREZ AND MET WITH VENEZUELAN
MINISTER OF DEFENSE MAJ GEN HOMERO LEAL TORRES.

4. COMMENT: BASED ON INFO AVAILABLE THUS FAR, THIS MEETING
SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN LARGELY A SOCIAL ACTIVITY WITH LITTLE SUBSTANTIVE
CONTENT BEYOND A GENERAL UNDERTAKING TO CONTINUE THE DIALOGUE AMONG
THE MILITARY LEADERS OF THE COUNTRIES REPRESENTED. FROM THE
VENEZUELAN GOT'S STANDPOINT, HOWEVER, THIS GATHERING IS YET
ANOTHER SIGN OF RECOGNITION OF VENEZUELA'S GROWING PRESTIGE AND ITS
WILLINGNESS TO SERVE AS A FOCAL POINT FOR LATIN AMERICAN SOLIDARITY
ACTIVITIES. THIS GATHERING ALSO HELPED TO ENHANCE THE POSITION OF
BERECIARTU, WHO IS CURRENTLY JOCKEYING FOR POSITION
WITH MAJ GEN PAREDES BELLO, VENEZUELAN AIR FORCE COMMANDER, AS
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THE NEW MINISTER OF DEFENSE WHEN MAJ GEN LEAL TORRES RETIRES
THIS SUMMER.
ASENCIO

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